



Catholic police officers in Northern Ireland: Voices out of silence

Mary Gethins

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This exciting book, newly available in paperback, aims to establish the historical and cultural reasons why there was only a participation rate of 7-8% by the Catholic population in policing Northern Ireland when the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) came into being in 2001, even though Catholics constituted 46% of the total population. It also aims to ascertain whether or not implementation of the Patten Commission's recommendation to recruit to the PSNI on a 50: 50 basis between Catholics and non-Catholics has resulted in greater representation and what the political and cultural obstacles might be in transforming policing from meeting colonial model criteria to those of the liberal model advocated by Patten. In doing this, author Mary Gethins uses a wealth of historical data to show that there has for a long time been a problematic relationship between the native Irish Catholic population and the police, and the reasons for Catholic under-representation in the police force can be largely put down to this legacy. A survey of Catholic police officers focusing on family history, reasons for joining the police and sacrifices perceived to have been made in joining a largely Protestant organisation provide a strong empirical evidence base from which Gethins draws illuminating lessons. The work is informed by sociological theory to show that Catholic police officers are atypical of the Catholic population at large in Northern Ireland, and best explained by the concept of fragmented identity.



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